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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

DRAFT

5 March 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director, Office of National Estimates

SUBJECT : The Manner of Production of Soviet Military Estimates

1. This memorandum gives my view of the advantages and disadvantages of the task force method of writing the military NIEs that was tried this year, and makes recommendations for the writing of these estimates in the future.

2. This evaluation is complicated by the fact that two things were changed this year -- the length and detail in the NIE, as well as the method of drafting, and two things changed about the method of drafting -- it was taken from the ONE Staff and given to the DDI/DDS&T, and the latter created a task force for the production of the draft. The following evaluation recommends that next year's NIE also have more detail, and address the method of drafting in this light.

3. The general recommendation and three approaches to carrying it out are given on pages 14 to 23.

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Chief, SMT Staff

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THE MANNER AND PRODUCTION OF SOVIET MILITARY ESTIMATES

I. The manner of putting out the Soviet military estimates this year resulted in a generally good, but not outstanding, product.

A. The approach of the estimate was generally well received by the consumer, so far as can be determined.

1. NIE 11-8-70 apparently has been well received by the NSC Staff. It lays out the evidence, the line of analysis, the conclusions, and the alternative views in some detail in a satisfactory manner. The length of the estimate has not been considered too great.

2. The concept of an explicit estimate laying things out in detail is accepted as good even by those who disagree with some of the aspects of it. For instance, DIA objects to the alternative numerical projections, as being confusing to the planner, but they wish to keep the explicit presentation of evidence and analysis.

3. The way in which alternative views are explained at length makes a more "honest" estimate. There is no need to waffle a position to get agreement. This is generally agreed to be the biggest "plus" of the new approach.

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B. The estimates are not, however, as good as they could or should be.

1. The basic text was generally written by research specialists, who were not uniformly good writers.

2. The length of the estimates, the exigencies of seemingly endless coordination, and the human failure of those who worked on the estimates to maintain the same high level of effort at all times resulted in some unevenness in the final product. Consequently some parts are unnecessarily wordy, obscure, and repetitious.

II. There is general agreement, however, among those producing the estimate that the production process worked slowly and inefficiently.

A. The reason for this was initially the confusion of how to go about the new approach.

1. Part of the time taken in the production of the estimates was a result of the fact that the procedures had to be worked out by the task forces, who were unfamiliar with producing an estimate and were not prepared to do so.

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2. There was also initial confusion as to how responsibilities and authority would be divided between ONE and the task force and what the organizing concepts of the estimate should be.

B. The setting up of task forces to write the estimates proved to be an inefficient utilization of CIA resources.

1. The driving concept was to give the writing of the NIE to those who dealt with the subjects on a day-to-day basis, to the research specialists. These people generally knew their subjects well, but they were generally not able to express their views clearly and succinctly in writing. Research reports go through an editorial process. The drafts for the NIEs did not -- and showed it.

2. The task force set up to put these pieces together into an NIE was made up of people who were unfamiliar with how to organize and write an NIE and how to get it through the Board of National Estimates. The task force staffs set up to write the estimate were no more used to the problems, and duplicated the ONE Staff.

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3. While the task force was struggling with these unfamiliar problems, the ONE Staff which was used to dealing with them was not used and was reduced in size by three people.

4. The ONE Staff could perfectly well have written a more detailed estimate as required; it had not done so previously -- not because it could not, but because the direction of the Board chairman was that it should not.

C. The task force this year worked best when a large number of human resources were invested to make up for their inexperience. It broke down when insufficient task force resources were marshalled.

1. For NIE 11-8 a GS-17 or -18 was used full time as a task force chairman. He had at least two people, in the GS-14-16 range working for him full time. Once produced by the task force, it took the entire time of the Board chairman and two people from the ONE Staff to move it through coordination. It was a good job largely because of the ability and drive of the BNE chairman, and because of the large amount of manpower that went into it. It succeeded almost in spite of the task force approach, not because of it.

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2. NIE 11-3 was moving slowly and awkwardly until the chairman was put to work on it full time, other GS-13-GS-15s were working on it full time, and a former ONE Staff man was given the job of rewriting it.

3. NIE 11-14 was not successfully produced by the task force largely because there was not -- in any real sense -- a task force. For all intents and purposes, there was one GS-15 and his assistant working on the estimate for the first five months. It was clear that the task force chairman was overburdened; he could not call upon others in his organization because they were working full time on producing inputs to NSSMs.

D. The task forces this year did not make best use of the resources of the US intelligence community.

1. The task forces made very little use of the inputs by non-CIA components of USIB. The quality of those inputs may not have been uniformly high, but they certainly were underutilized.

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2. The task forces generally did not make full use of the USIB committees -- GMAIC, SIC, and JAEIC -- which were set up to deal with technical issues, preferring to rely almost exclusively on CIA resources.

E. A task force approach has a great deal of merit in dealing with specific technical problems, but not with an estimate as a whole.

1. The idea of individual technical parts being written by experts is a necessary starting point for any estimate. In the past, GMAIC, JAEIC, and SIC wrote contributions to those parts of the NIE for which they were responsible.

2. A task force -- in which the persons who deal with the subject on a day-to-day basis get together and define the facts, methods of analysis, agreed conclusions, and the bases for differences -- is a very valuable and useful forum in which analysts can mutually enlighten intelligence problems.

3. No one person or set of persons is expert on all points, however. Thus the best procedure for utilizing

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experts in several fields is to set up several task forces, each dealing with the subject on which they are knowledgeable. Thus a task force is appropriately set up on ICBM characteristics and capabilities, on ICBM deployment, on bomber capabilities, etc. Insofar as feasible these should use groups already in existence on these subjects.

4. But these groups of experts need overall direction and their end products need to be put together into a total final product. An NIE, in the last analysis, has to be more than the sum of its parts, more than a number of individual task force reports stapled together. In the past, the guidance to the groups of experts to ensure that the parts all contribute to the whole has been furnished by ONE. And it was the task of ONE to make the whole more than the sum of its parts.

F. A major reason for the long production process this year was that the task force took an inordinately long time to put the parts together into a whole that was acceptable to the Board of National Estimates.

1. The task forces for NIE 11-8 and NIE 11-3 went through three drafts before they produced one acceptable

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to the BNE. The task force for NIE 11-14 never did produce an acceptable draft. The task force took three months to do this in the case of NIE 11-8; 4 months in the case of NIE 11-3; and tried for five months in the case of NIE 11-14.

2. Generally speaking, the product did not become acceptable until the task force gave the drafting to a generalist, who did not follow the information on a day-to-day basis, and who was used to writing a product with unity, coherence, and proper emphasis.

a. NIE 11-8 was largely written by the task force chairman or by his staff man, or by members of the BNE and the ONE Staff.

b. NIE 11-3 didn't get off the ground until it was put into some shape by a former ONE Staff man who had to be specially detailed to do it.

c. NIE 11-14 was written by the ONE Staff.

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III. But even if the task force were to work efficiently, there are more fundamental systematic problems with the task force approach used.

A. The basic problem with the manner of producing the estimate was that setting up a DDI/DDS&T task force violated one of the first principles of administration -- namely, that both authority and responsibility should clearly rest in one place.  
(See diagram attached.)

1. The directions of the DCI were that the Board chairman of the estimate was to be responsible for the estimate. In saying this, he was only restating a NSCID which has long been agreed to and proven in practice. The directive did not, however, define the authority of the Board chairman.

2. The DCI directive then gave the job of producing the estimate to the DDI and DDS&T who set up a task force to do the actual job on each estimate. The relative responsibilities and authority of the Board chairman and the task force chairman were never defined. In fact, however, the task force chairman was responsible to, and was paid by OSR and the DDI or OSI and the DDS&T.

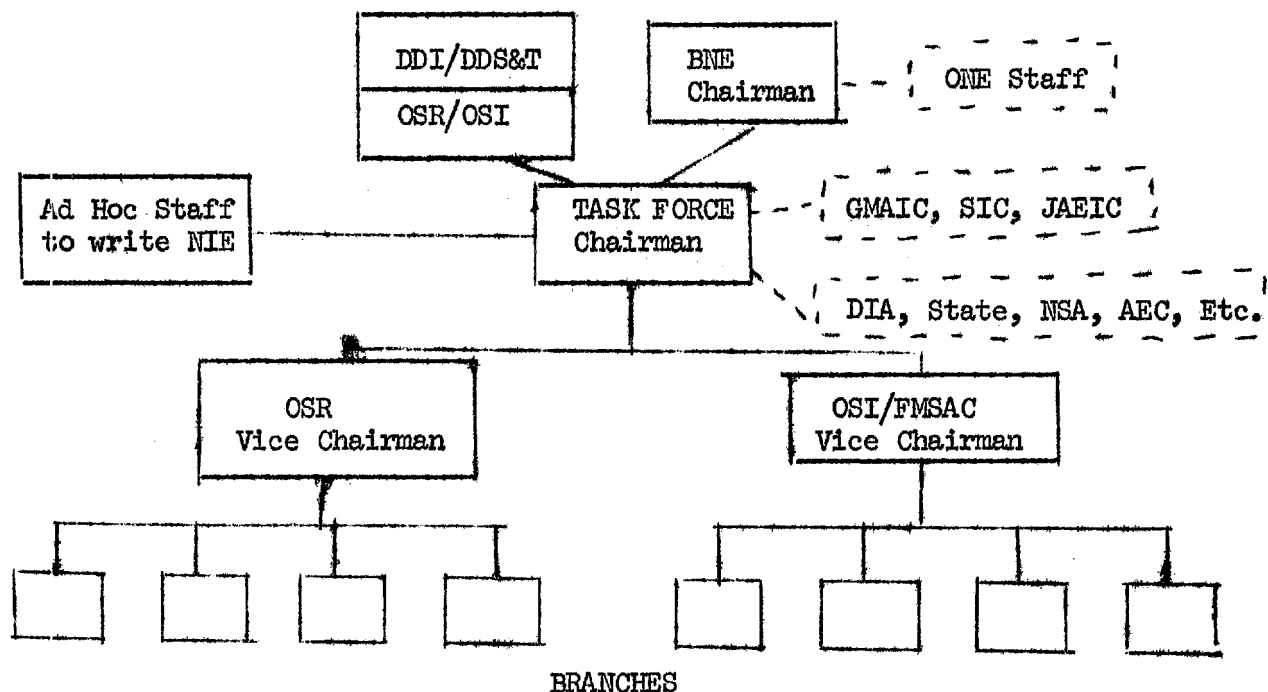
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The chart below represents the organization of the task force and its relation to the Board chairman.

CURRENT TASK FORCE APPROACH



The ONE Staff and the non-CIA USIB agencies and USIB committees are in dashed lines, as they were never made a part of the production process.

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3. As a consequence the Board chairman did not have effective authority over the task force chairman, who was in a position of being able to decide which instructions he was going to follow, and which not. This was an impossible administrative situation.

4. The problem of administrative authority and responsibility was then compounded on the staff level. The task force chairman set up his own staff to support his activities, thereby duplicating the ONE staff. The Board chairman, however, was used to working with the ONE Staff and continued to do so. This led to rather unproductive debates over the authority and responsibilities of the respective staffs. The debates were as often as not resolved by having both staffs do a job, with the decision as to which product to use put off until the product was reviewed.

B. The task force approach also confused the position of the Director as head of USIB with his position as head of CIA.

1. ONE was created to support the Director as head of USIB in his responsibility for national estimates. The creation of ONE was a recognition of the validity of that distinction. And this is why ONE is in the Office of the Director, not under the DDI.

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2. If one accepts the principle that the NIEs should be produced by the DDI and the DDS&T representing CIA as one of the member agencies of USIB, there is no logical reason why the NIEs should not be produced by some other, presumably coequal, member of USIB such as DIA.

3. USIB committees such as GMAIC, SIC and JAEIC were unilaterally bypassed in the production of the estimates. The task force relied upon the CIA component in each case, rather than upon USIB machinery as a whole.

C. The task force approach did not sufficiently recognize that the production of an estimate is a job for the generalist.

1. In the final analysis, the Soviet military NIEs had this year to be put together by generalist -- not a person working on a subject on a day-to-day basis.

2. The reason for this development is that the writing of an NIE is primarily a problem of conceptualization and expression, not a problem of research. An NIE needs to be written by someone used to thinking about the whole problem of the estimate, by someone used to writing, not by someone whose primary job is to do research on parts of the problem.

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3. The research specialist makes his best contribution by marshalling the evidence and expressing judgments in the area of his expertise. The job of putting it all together is the job of a generalist, not of a specialist.

IV. My recommendations for producing Soviet military estimates for the next cycle are to retain the useful aspects of the new approach tried this year, and to revise the unuseful ones.

A. The concept of an NIE with more extensive treatment of problems should be kept, but the document should be streamlined.

1. Laying out the evidence, analysis, and detailed manner of arriving at conclusions should be retained.

2. The manner of laying out differing conclusions in the text in some detail makes for clearer and more useful estimates and should be retained.

3. The use of annexes to deal with certain subjects at greater length should continue.

4. The need for projections in strings of figures (as in NIE 11-8 and 11-3) rather than in discussions of major considerations and general trends (as in NIE 11-14) should be rethought.

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5. Previously there had been OSR, OSI and FMSAC positions for the NIE. The task force did serve a useful purpose in arriving at a CIA position, and should be retained on this basis. The head of the CIA task force would be the CIA representative at the USIB representatives meetings.

B. The writing of NIEs should be entirely under the direction of the Board chairman, the ONE Staff should write the integrated estimate, and research offices and technical committees should provide preliminary drafts and annexes within their area of competence.

1. This approach will not only give the chairman responsibility for the estimate, but also the authority to carry his responsibilities through.

2. The ONE Staff:

a. Is used to working with the Board chairman and is responsible to him;

b. Follows all aspects of the development of Soviet military forces and capabilities from the generalist point of view;

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c. Is used to the process of conceptualizing an NIE, arriving at estimative judgments, and writing them down clearly in a well balanced and presented package.

3. The research offices and USIB committees should do what they do best -- namely produce research reports and technical analyses responsive to the terms of reference. They also should furnish as an aid to drafting, preliminary drafts of the NIE and annexes

4. In this manner each component would do the job it is best suited and trained to perform. As a consequence the estimates would come out more rapidly, efficiently, and satisfactorily.

C. There are, however, several approaches within this framework. These are given in the following pages along with "wiring diagrams" and with some discussion of the respective advantages and disadvantages of each.

1. Each of them avoids the basic systematic problems of the present system, while dealing in different manner with the exercise of the authority and responsibilities of the Board chairman.



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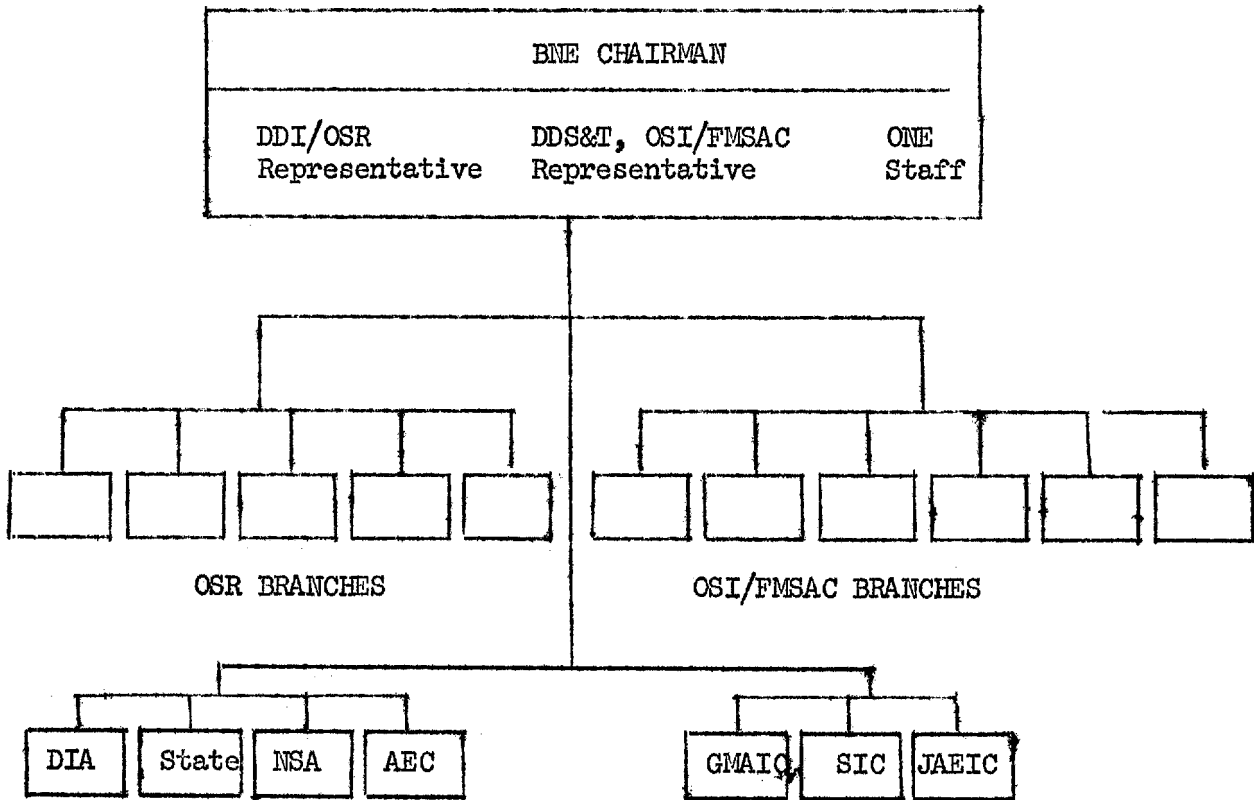
2. The BNE chairman should be given greater leeway in the manner in which they exercise their authority. Their styles are different, and the approach that suits one may not suit another.

3. The three approaches given do not exhaust the possibilities. Nor are they mutually exclusive. Aspects of #1 and #3 could be put together, for instance, or some other combination made.

4. The approaches are presented in the order of moving from the greatest involvement of the chairman to the least involvement.

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APPROACH #1



Non-CIA USIB agencies

This plan has the BNE chairman heading a task force made up of appropriate representatives from OSR, OSI, FMSAC, and the ONE Staff. The Chairman would take an active day-to-day hand in putting out the estimate, parcelling out tasks as required. It would entail the most work for the Chairman.

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APPROACH #1 would:

- a. Solve the administrative control problem by having the BNE chairman the active head of a task force;
- b. Utilize the conceptualizing and writing resources of the ONE Staff but not overload them;
- c. Utilize the OSR, OSI, FMSAC representatives as channels of communication to their respective components, and thus promote responsive and timely inputs;
- d. There would be a special relationship with CIA in house support, but it would still utilize the USIB resources adequately.

Problems of this approach would be:

- a. The chairman may not wish to participate in the estimate to this extent;
- b. As there would be a more dynamic relationship between ONE on the one hand and OSR, OSI, and FMSAC on the other, support from the latter components could be expected to conflict with other responsibilities of these components.

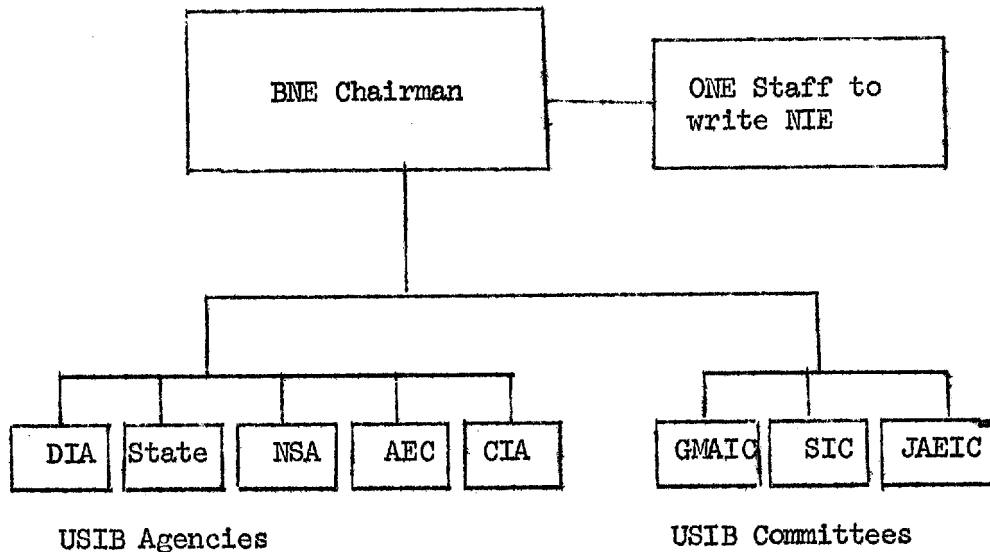
Recommended solutions to the problems are:

- a. Have a Board chairman who wishes to work in this fashion;
- b. Establish early on an anticipated tasking level and get agreement to it.

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APPROACH #2



This is the old NIE system as it was supposed to work. As a matter of fact, there was no CIA contribution under the old system, but rather OSR, FMSAC, and OSI contributions. This approach would involve about the same work load for the chairman as now. The advantage of this approach is that there would be one CIA view. Quite properly this view could be put together by a CIA task force chairman who would also represent CIA at the USIB representatives meetings.

This would solve the:

- a. Administrative problem by having the BNE chairman in charge;
- b. USIB problem by utilizing the USIB machinery instead of by-passing it;
- c. Conceptualizing and writing problem by having the ONE Staff write the estimate.

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Its potential problems are:

- a. Contributions would not be on time or responsive;
- b. BNE staff would have too large a load;
- c. The lines of communication in theory run from the BNE staff through the chairman to contributors, but in fact they would have to run directly.

Recommended solutions to these problems are:

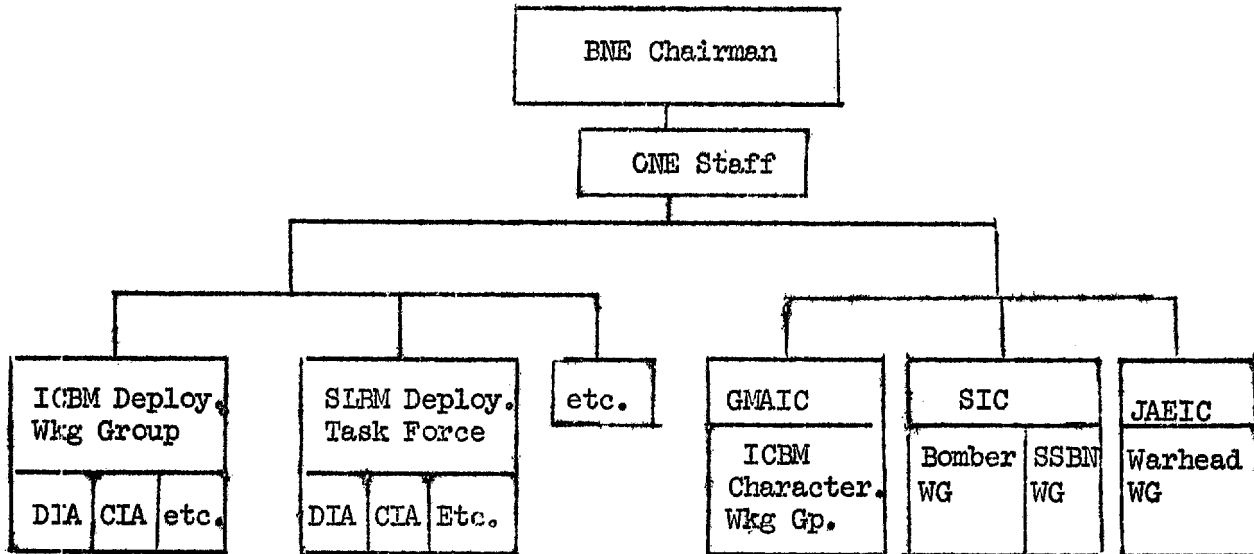
- a. Adequate lead time, careful conceptualization of the estimate, explicit TRs, and more energetic checking on progress with regard to contributions should reduce the problems of tardy contributions if not eliminate them;
- b. BNE staff would have to be brought up to its authorized strength, and estimates would have to be sufficiently separated in time (say 6 weeks) that 3-5 staff men could work 4-6 weeks on drafting each estimate.
- c. There is no way to solve this problem except by having the job of the staff clear and have them perform their job with competence and tact.

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APPROACH #3



This approach represents the manner of production of the NIPP. It would do three things: (a) involve the BNE chairman the least; (b) involve the ONE Staff the most; and (c) ask for contributions from specialist working groups on specific areas and problems of their competence, rather than from agencies in general.

This approach would:

- a. Best meet the intent of having the person involved in the subject on a day-to-day basis make the basic input, and utilize the task force approach to do this;
- b. Give the conceptualizing, organizing, and writing of the estimate to the ONE Staff;
- c. Utilize the resources of the specialists in the intelligence community most efficiently.

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There are two obvious problems:

- a. It would require the greatest amount of work by the ONE Staff;
- b. As working groups (not agencies) would contribute directly to ONE, agency heads would not review the contributions and could not easily influence them.

Solutions to the problems would be to:

- a. Increase the ONE Staff involved (to about 10 in the case of SMT).
- b. Give agency heads the right to review and footnote the working group contributions.

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